

Madam Chair/Mr. Chairman and members of the committee

I'm Karen Plaza of Rocky Hill and here to support HB 115 –An Act Concerning the Approval Process for Residential Nursing Facilities Serving Inmates and Mental Health Patients

We are here because this administration and iCare are pushing and in favor of placing convicts (murderers, rapists, molesters, burglars, etc.) and the mentally ill into a convalescent home built back in 1967 for the frail elderly and people needing rehab. This was not built for housing criminals and the mentally ill.

Malloy and the owner of i/Care want to circumvent our town's planning and zoning committees; committees in place to protect our town and our residents. They want to disobey the law. The law you passed in 2011 stating that convicts not be placed in the middle of residential areas and towns be advised in advance of these changes to convalescent homes. This rogue governor is ignoring that law.

What they want to do is charge the Federal Government an additional 5-6 million dollars for Medicare and Medicaid - programs that are already going broke.

Governor you visited and supported the people of Newtown after the slaughter on Dec. 14. We thank you for that.

What about the children in Rocky Hill? You want to place convicts and mentally ill people in a densely populated area in this home. Dinosaur State Park is just down the street. What about

the children who visit and explore that park? Don't the residents and visitor's to our area deserve to feel safe?

Remember Adam Lenza of Newtown, Steven Hayes and Joshua Kominsarjevsky. Can you guarantee that these types of individuals will not be released into this home or the other homes you are planning to purchase in other towns? Are these the types of criminals and mentally ill you want to place in the middle of a town in an unfenced building constructed for the frail elderly. I know you will say no now, but Hayes and Kominsarjevsky were determined to be ok. It didn't work out.

What Malloy is saying to residents of Rocky Hill and the future towns to be selected to house criminals and the mentally ill, is you should plan to arm yourselves with shotguns and semi-automatic weapons. The state will NOT protect you. This from the governor who is advocating new, stronger gun laws, and checks on identifying the mentally ill.

For everyone here, this does not end with Rocky Hill. Mark Lawler, a Malloy confidant, is looking for another 440 beds now as he stated on the radio Feb.23. If this rouge administration succeeds in circumventing Rocky Hill's planning and zoning laws, your town will also be circumvented. You may be getting one of these homes in your area in the near future.

The most tragic part of this situation is the state currently has available places to treat these people in a secure environment for them and the state's citizens. The state can turn these facilities over to a company to treat them. Even if they charge a dollar so these places can become "private" facilities.

For you news people – please do your job and follow the money – not the 5-6 million dollars the governor is trying to bilk the federal government. I saw on the internet that the head of iCare is a friend and contributor to Malloy. It's interesting that they received this contract. Was this plan to convert convalescent homes into prison facilities put out to bid? No – it was done in secret. They only looked at 2 bids. No one remembers it published in the newspaper. We know other towns won't be advised of these plans in advance. Malloy and iCare will strike in the middle of the night again.

Senator Doyle and Representative Guerrera have House Bill 115 in committee to stop this abuse of power. I urge all representatives to support this bill. Malloy has indicated he will veto this bill so we need to override his veto. I'm asking you members of the House and Senate to look at this problem.

I ask you to look to your colleagues to your left, now on the right. Which of them will be notified of criminals moving into their town. Would you want it in your neighborhoods, near your children or grandchildren, parents, family, and friends?

I urge you to read the article (attached) and watch the video "Small Texas Town with Nursing Home for Criminals" found on protectct.com. It describes what is like to have a few criminals in a convalescent home in your neighborhood. Then tell me who will be living in a prison.

It will be the hard-working residents who brought a home, are raising a family, play with their children, attend church, pay taxes, care for their community and follow the laws. They will become the prisoners – not the convicts.

Would you want to live like this. Have your children live like this. If NO, then it's your duty to support HR 115 in large enough numbers to defeat a Malloy veto.

If HR 115 is not passed, you will be asking people to give up their lives. Pull shades, blinds, not let kids play in their yards. Activities we all enjoy. Would you ask your families to live like this?

Would you place this type of facility in the middle of Newtown? If the answer is NO, then criminals and the mentally ill should not be placed in the middle of Rocky Hill or any other towns in this state.

It's not worth the money. Criminals and mentally ill should be in areas were they are confined and not able to walk out the front door and into our communities.

Nursing Home For Criminals Concerns Neighbors

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Most of us probably think of a nursing home as a place for elderly loved ones to get the care and help they need...not a haven for criminals sponging off taxpayers. But that's what FOX 4's Becky Oliver found in a community outside of Fort Worth.

It's a serene, tidy little neighborhood on the shores of Lake Worth with parks, lakefront homes, and cottages where families have lived for decades. But there's a cancer in the midst of the tranquility.

"You can't even sit in your own yard because you are afraid of what is going to happen," said Mary Cecil.

"My family has lived here since 1935 and it feels like we're in jail, you know, because of these people," said Kerry Gallagher.

There are about 50 of "these people" at the Lake Worth Nursing Home...registered sex offenders, convicted felons, and prison parolees, some labeled violent offenders by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ).

But these are not your typical nursing home patients confined to a wheelchair or bed.

"Sick, old people are fine in there, you know. Not these young 30 or 40 year old sex offenders down there. That's ridiculous," said Mary Cecil, who lives just down the street from the nursing home.

"We've got little kids around here and I don't like them around them," said Paul Williams, who also lives in the neighborhood.

For weeks FOX 4 watched offenders from the nursing home roaming the neighborhood.

Clifton Driver is a sex offender on parole until 2022. He has a long criminal history including rape of a child and convictions for drugs, theft, weapons, and public lewdness.

George Davis is labeled a "violent offender" according to TDCJ, on parole until 2017. His convictions include burglary, drugs, and forgery.

Robert Deal is on parole until 2027. He's a burglar, convicted three times. He rides a bike all over town. We saw him go to a neighborhood yard sale and stop by lots of stores.

Deal told Becky Oliver he's in the nursing home because of end-stage liver disease.

"You're out in the community a lot. You're out riding your bike a lot," Oliver said to Deal. "I don't even have a bike," Deal responded. "Oh you've never been on a bike before?" asked Oliver. "You've got a lot of information about me so you don't need to ask me anything," said Deal. "I'm just wondering why you are always out riding a bike," said Oliver. "You've got me mixed up with someone else," Deal responded as he walked away.

Dorian Thomas is on parole until 2019 with convictions for theft, forgery, and drugs. He says he had a heart attack and stroke and left prison early.

"Would you normally be in TDC if you didn't have these medical problems?" Becky Oliver asked Thomas. "Yes ma'am, probably," Thomas replied.

We saw Thomas many times at a nearby city park, having a beer and a smoke.

"We see you down in the park drinking a lot. Do you go down there to drink?" Oliver asked Deal. "No ma'am. It's against the law to drink down there," said Thomas. "I never drink because the police said you can't....city ordinance, that you cannot drink," Thomas continued. "Oh, the city ordinance. Well, you're not supposed to be drinking on parole either are you?" asked Oliver. "No," Thomas replied. "So, you haven't been down in that park drinking?" asked Oliver. "No ma'am," said Thomas.

Raymond Burgett says he's been at Lake Worth Nursing Home since January. His record includes aggravated robbery, burglary, manufacturing and possession of drugs,

and DWI.

We asked offender Clifton Driver who is footing the bill for all the nursing home care.

“Why are you living there?” Becky Oliver asked Driver. “I can’t tell you why people are living there,” said Driver. “Let me tell you this...what you can do. You can go to that nursing home and talk with that nursing home because I don’t have any information,” Driver continued. “Do you pay to live there or does the state pay for you to live there?” asked Oliver. “Now wait a minute. Now see, why would that be your business? I don’t even want to talk to you,” Driver told Oliver.

Driver didn’t want to talk and neither did the owner of the nursing home, Jon Shilling.

When FOX 4 went to the nursing home he tried to kick us off of the public street that runs in front of the nursing home.

“I’m telling you what to do. You’re on my property and I am going to press charges on you,” Shilling told Becky Oliver and our photographer.

We wanted to ask about all the residents roaming the neighborhood.

“Why are all these people out riding their bikes, drinking in the park, drinking alcohol, going to the stores? Why are they out and about in the community?” Oliver asked Shilling. But Shilling didn’t respond. He didn’t want to talk and called the cops on us.

“I’m not answering your questions. I’m telling you this is my property. If you think I’m wrong you go look it up and prove me wrong,” Shilling told Oliver

But we didn’t need to look it up. When the police showed up an officer confirmed what we already knew.

“I own this property right here,” Shilling told the Lake Worth police officer. “You don’t own this roadway, sir,” the officer told Shilling. “Yes I do,” said Shilling. “No you don’t. It’s a public roadway,” the officer explained to Shilling.

So, back to the offenders. Why so many in this nursing home?

“The reason for the high concentration in that facility is the facility’s willingness to take offenders on supervision,” said Jason Clark, spokesperson for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

Clark says the state doesn’t limit the number of offenders living in a nursing home. And by law he cannot disclose their medical condition. But he says they can stay at a nursing home facility as long as the facility verifies its medically necessary. The government picks up the tab.

"If you release somebody early to go in to a nursing home, that burden is being shifted from TDCJ over to social security and Medicaid," Becky Oliver said to Clark. "Yes, if the offender is not in custody we are no longer paying for that individual to be incarcerated," said Clark. "So it is a big shift from state dollars over to federal dollars," said Oliver. "That is accurate," said Clark.

"From a public safety standpoint, is it a good idea to have that many of them in one place?" Oliver asked Clarke. "I don't believe there is a cause for concern," Clarke responded. "We have not had any major incidents there at that nursing home," Clark continued.

No major incidents unless you consider a sex offender looking at child pornography on a computer at the nursing home serious. Dennis Croxton's parole was revoked and he is now back in prison.

And police arrested Scott Marlar for making a terroristic threat. He is also back behind bars.

Police reports from the Lake Worth Police Department show complaints ranging from death threats to violent outbursts to child pornography at the nursing home.

Neighbors have put up "no trespassing" and "private property" signs to try to keep roaming offenders off of their property.

"There's no more children playing in the street," says Linda Williams. "You hardly ever see a kid riding a bike."

Mary Cecil won't let her granddaughter play in her yard.

"Because of these criminals walking down the street at all hours, buying beer and booze," said Cecil.

"It is just scary," said Kerry Gallagher. "It's ridiculous the way these guys get to travel around. They get in your yard," Cecil continued.

Kerry Gallagher says she caught one offender urinating in her yard.

"I could see he had pulled his private part out," said Gallagher.

And FOX 4 cameras saw the same thing. On one occasion we saw an offender urinating in the bird bath right outside the nursing home.

"I understand people need second and third chances and they need a place to live but this is not the correct place for them to be," said Gallagher.

The Lake Worth Nursing Home has approximately 66 residents. More than 30 of them

are on parole from prison. Others not on parole have criminal records. The state's [sex offender registry](#) shows 27 registered sex offenders listed at the facility's address.

The nursing home is not breaking any laws by housing the offenders.

We don't know if the non-criminal residents of the facility were notified of the criminals living there. But former staff told FOX 4 they were not told about anyone's criminal background and that is kept confidential.